

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**17 NOVEMBER 2022**

**REPORT OF THE  
ACTING RETURNING OFFICER**

**COUNCIL DECISION**

**Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook**

**REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2022**

**SUMMARY**

This report sets out proposed changes for polling districts and places taking into account the submission of the Acting Returning Officer and feedback from consultation.

**REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISION**

A Polling District Review has been necessitated by changes to warding arrangements following an electoral review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

**RECOMMENDATION**

Cabinet is asked to consider and recommend changes to Polling Districts and Polling Places to Council on 23 November 2022.

**DETAIL**

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) identified Stockton-on-Tees as requiring an electoral review given the length of time since the last review was carried out.
2. The final recommendations confirm a Council size of 56 Councillors (the same number as there are now), 27 wards (one more than there are now) and changes to the boundaries of 23 wards with four remaining the same. In addition, as a result of the proposed new ward boundaries, revised parish electoral arrangements have been agreed for Billingham Town Council, Egglecliffe, Grindon and Thorpe Thewles, Ingleby Barwick, Kirklevington and Castlelevington and Thornaby. Full details of the changes can be found at the LGBCE website at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/north-east/stockton-on-tees/stockton-on-tees>
3. An Order has been laid in Parliament and the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in May 2023.
4. As a result of changes to wards and boundaries, it has been necessary to conduct an interim polling district review.
5. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a requirement to conduct reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places every five years. Although not a compulsory review, the same processes should be

undertaken for an interim review. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025.

6. A Council's area is divided into polling districts with one or more districts making up a ward, with a polling place being the area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.
7. Polling districts have needed to be revised to ensure that they are co-terminus with the new ward boundaries. In addition, the review has also considered:
  - Polling Districts - Are they well defined? Do they follow natural boundaries? Are there suitable transport links? Are there any obstacles to crossing polling district boundaries?
  - Polling Places – The location, size and accessibility of the polling place and its availability now and in the future
  - Polling Stations – The suitability and accessibility of the room or area for use as a polling station. A polling station is the room or area within the polling place where voting takes place. Unlike polling districts and polling places which are fixed by the Local Authority, polling stations are chosen by the relevant Returning Officer for the election

8. Electoral Commission Guidance states:

*Where the polling district/place review is to be carried out before the new electoral boundaries are fully in force, it will need to be based on the current electoral boundaries, but should also take any new boundaries that are not yet in force into account. To avoid having to review the polling districts and polling places again once the new boundaries are fully in force, any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect could be made into separate polling districts as part of the review.*

*Also, until the new boundaries are fully in force, the register will need to be constructed in a way that is capable of reflecting the current and the new boundaries. Again, this can be achieved by making any parts of existing electoral areas that will be split when the new boundaries come into effect into separate polling districts.*

*For the same reasons where, as a result of a review of one set of electoral boundaries, the boundaries for different elections are no longer co-terminous, those areas that are no longer co-terminous could also be made into separate polling districts.*

9. In short, polling districts have needed to be re-drawn to reflect the needs of both existing and future ward boundaries. This will be achieved by establishing temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 which will then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023. The interim polling district review has therefore consulted on temporary and longer-term changes.
10. The Acting Returning Officer's submission was published on 21 September 2022 with a closing date for comments of 28 October 2022. The submission summarised the existing arrangements, proposals for temporary polling districts for the period 1 December 2022 to 1 December 2023 and proposals for how these temporary districts will then be merged into appropriate adjoining polling districts on publication of the Revised Register on 1 December 2023.

## CONSULTATION

11. The Statutory Notice publicising the review was displayed / sent to:

- Libraries
- Website
- Parish Councils
- Community Centres

12. In addition, the Acting Returning Officer's submission was sent to:

- Website
- Libraries
- All Councillors
- MPs
- Parish Councils
- Area Partnerships
- Disability Groups/ BME/faith community via Catalyst

13. The table below contains a summary of the comments received and comments/revised proposals in response to the consultation feedback.

Ward/Polling District	From	Comment	Acting Returning Officer Response
Grangefield	Councillor	Although Grangefield estate works for the Grays Road Institute and Newham Grange estate for St. Paul's Church, it is much too far to walk from Westfield Crescent area, Durham Road, Lilac Road and St. Crispin's to St. Paul's Church. Not everyone will have transport. Please can you look again and see if there is somewhere nearby where those residents can vote even if it is a portakabin?	Revert back to St John's Church, Durham Road for GF3 and GF4 and merge GF3 and GF4 on 1.12.2023

## REVISED PROPOSALS

14. Final proposals of the Acting Returning Officer, following consultation, are attached at **Appendix 1**.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

15. Accessibility of polling places is a key consideration of the polling district and places review.

## CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

16. No direct implications.

## FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

17. The review is required as a result of changes to warding patterns by the LGBCE and in accordance with the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

18. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.
19. The proposals take in account LGBCE proposals, consultation feedback and Electoral Commission Guidance that the number of electors allocated to a particular polling station should not exceed 2,500 not including postal voters.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

20. All Councillors have been consulted.

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Background Papers: None  
Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific  
Property Implications: None